OUTLINE LESSONS IN RELIGION

RICHARD A. ARMSTRONG

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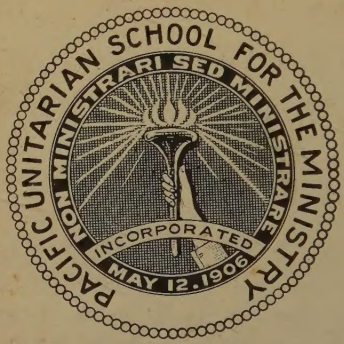

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IN

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OUTLINE LESSONS IN RELIGION.

THE Outline Lessons which will here be given, are a reproduction of a series of conversations which, in slightly varied form, I have held several times with classes of young men, young women, and little children. When I first framed the course, I tried to take hold of the inmost essence of religion in its eternal simplicity, and not so much to teach it to my classes, as to show them that they had all its material within them, if they would only think it out. I found that even the very young—intelligent children of nine or ten years old—were able to follow me, and to give right and true answers to carefully constructed questions, while the general line of thought could be so amplified and illustrated, as to interest earnest and inquiring young men and women, and supply them with an elementary philosophy of religion which should aid them to go down

deeper than the current controversies between the Orthodox and the Unitarian, or the Christian and the Secularist, and get at the *substratum* on which *all* religion is built. These Lessons should be conducted *chiefly* by putting questions to the scholars; and it will be vain for any Teacher to attempt to make use of them who cannot command quiet in his class, and secure the close attention of his scholars. Given these conditions, they will be found easy. The Teacher must go more or less fully into this point of the Lessons or that, according to the age and intelligence of his scholars. Some parts will be found unsuitable for the very young. Let the Teacher understand, and bear in mind throughout, that the great aim of this course is to give the scholar a clear and simple notion of what *religion* is—not this or that religion, but RELIGION—and to awaken his sensibility to its truth, its beauty, and its power. I am indebted for the suggestion of the opening Lessons to that admirable and most suggestive little work, "The Child's Book of the Soul" (Sunday School Association). How far or how closely I may have followed it, I do not know, and have refrained from ascertaining, not having seen the book for several years; but I trust that its author will forgive me for throwing some small part of its contents

into a new form. Let no Teacher attempt to use these Lessons till he has carefully read to the end of Lesson X.

In the above remarks I have addressed myself to the Sunday School Teacher. I hope, however, that Parents also may find these Lessons to contain some helpful suggestions for home use with their children.

PART I.

LESSON I.

What can we say about a pebble, if we are asked to describe it?

The chief things are that it is more or less heavy, of some shape or other, and of some colour or other.

It is no use to sow it in the ground and water it, for that will not change it. If we put it down, we have no fear that it will ever move away, unless some one or some thing moves it. It never makes any noise. We should never think of trying to educate it, for it has no power of thinking, feeling, or being good.

Now, what can we say about an acorn?

It, too, is more or less heavy, though not nearly

so heavy for its size as the pebble; and it has a shape, and it has colour. But, also, if we sow it, and give it sun and water, it *changes;* it *grows* into the sapling, the young tree, the enormous oak.

But neither the acorn nor the oak ever runs away, any more than the pebble. It makes no noise, though the wind may sound through the branches. It cannot be educated, for it cannot think, feel, or be good.

Now, what can we say about a dog?

It, too, is more or less heavy; and it has shape and colour like the pebble and the acorn. It, too, *grows,* like the oak-tree. Moreover, it *moves about,* can run away. It *makes a noise,* barks. It can even be educated or trained, *a little;* for it can think, feel, be good, *a little.* It shows that it thinks when it comes to its master for food: some dogs can even think enough to know when it is Sunday. It can *feel* pleasure and pain, and shows it by wagging its tail and frisking, or by howling. It can feel affection: most dogs are attached to their masters; some, on their master's death, have drooped and died themselves. It can be good, *a little.* [This is a childish phrase, and better understood by children than if you say, "it displays the rudiments of

a moral nature," which is what it means.] It learns to *obey;* and when a dog has stolen a bone from the larder, it will not only whine and crouch down in fear of a beating, which comes of its powers of *thinking* and of *feeling* pain; but you will see quite clearly that it is really *ashamed,* which comes of its power of *being good.*

Now, what can we say about a child?

It, too, is more or less heavy, and has shape and colour, like the pebble, the acorn, and the dog. It grows, too, like the acorn and the dog. It moves about, too, like the dog; and it makes a noise, though it does not bark. It can think, too, and feel, and be good. So that it has everything that the dog has. We shall see next time that it has *more.* Tell the children to try and think before next time, what the child is or has *more* than the dog.

Lesson II.

Recapitulation:—Question all up and down on the First Lesson.

The pebble has or is certain things [perceptible qualities].

The acorn has or is these, and in addition it has *growth.*

The dog has or is all these, and in addition moves about, makes a noise, and can think, feel, and be good a little.

The child has or is or does all these, but its powers are higher and greater than the dog's.

CONTINUATION:—Compare the child's power of movement with the dog's. At first, it seems that the dog has the best of it, for the dog can run much faster than the child, or even the grown man, ever can. But, after all, it is not so, for the child and the man have *variety* and *delicacy* of movements far beyond the puppy or the dog. A child or a man can learn to dance much better than a dog. A child or a man can learn all sorts of wonderful movements with the hands and fingers, which the dog can never learn:—beckoning, pointing, boxing, fencing, plaiting, drawing, playing musical instruments, writing, &c. The puppy soon learns to move about nearly as well as the grown dog ever will: the baby can hardly move at all, but may go on learning fresh varieties of beautiful movements all its life.

Compare the child's power of making a noise with the dog's. As with moving, so with making a noise, the child *begins* no better than the dog. It

can only cry. But it goes on learning *variety* and *delicacy* of noise or sound. It learns to laugh, to hiss, to hum, to whistle, to sing, &c.; nay, it learns to *speak*. More about speaking another time.

Compare the child's power of thinking with the dog's. As with moving and making noise, so with thinking, the baby seems to begin no better than the puppy. But it never ceases to learn to think better and better. The child of five years old can think better than the dog ever learns to think. It can think about more things. And after that, it goes on learning to think better and better. The dog can only think about what it has seen or smelt: the child, and still more the man, can think about what he has never seen. The dog can only think about things that have happened to it: the man can think about things that happened long before he was born—of history, of how the world came to exist. The dog cannot think much further forward than his next dinner, and it is only being hungry that leads him to think of that: the man can think forward to the time after he is dead—of how it will be with his grandchildren when they are old, of how it will be with him when he is dead, of whether the world will ever come to an end.

Lesson III.

Recapitulation:—Pebble, acorn, dog, child: each has, is, or does more than the one before it.

The child cannot move as well as the dog at first; but in the course of its life it learns much greater variety and delicacy of movement.

The child cannot make a noise any better than the dog at first; but it learns much greater variety and delicacy of sound, including speaking.

The child seems to think no better than the puppy at first; but it learns much greater variety, delicacy, and range of thought.

Continuation:—If you think it will be understood, you may add that the dog seems able to put only very few thoughts *together;* but the man learns to put an immense number of thoughts together, and to use them as one whole—and so he makes arguments, sciences, and philosophies. Then go on:—

Compare the child's power of feeling with the dog's. At first, the child only feels hunger and

thirst, pain and pleasure, in the same kind of way as the dog. Then it learns to feel affection, to love. But the dog loves his master, too. The child, however, comes to feel affection for a great many people—parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, playfellows—while the dog seldom cares very strongly for more than one. When the child grows older, he may even learn to love people he has never seen, his cousins across the sea, his dead grandfather, men told of in books. Some men learn a still higher love, and love all men everywhere and wish to do them good; they love the *race* of men, mankind. Even children may learn to love God, and we shall see in another lesson how strong the love of God may grow to be. The child and the man can be made to feel happy or unhappy by a great many things which do not make a dog feel so.

Compare the child's power of being good with the dog's. At first, the child has quite as little power of being good as the dog, and then for a time its "being good" is just obeying its mother, as the dog's "being good" is obeying its master. But, by and by, the child learns that some things are good and some bad in themselves, without being told to do them or not to do them—learns

to be kind, gentle, good-tempered, truthful, and not to be cross, cruel, mean. Grown men may get still greater powers of being good, while the dog never learns to be good in any other way than obeying its master.

We say that the pebble (iron, rock, earth, water, air) is *lifeless;* that the acorn, oak (rose, cabbage, moss, &c.), has *vegetable* life; that the dog (horse, fish, bird, &c.) has *animal* life; that the child, man, has *human* life. [Scientific men have now found that it is difficult to draw any *exact line* between vegetable and animal life. Some vegetables move about. Some animals live always fixed in one spot. But, for all that, vegetable life and animal life are different, and the differences are broadly what we have said.]

Lesson IV.

Recapitulation:—Pebble, acorn, dog, child.

In movement, sound, thinking, feeling, being good, the child has at first no more power than the dog. But in all it learns much more, acquires delicacy, variety, range, &c.

Lifeless, vegetable, animal, human.

Continuation:—What is heavy, and has colour or shape, we call *Matter*, whether it *grows* or not.

A pebble is matter and nothing else. An acorn, oak, is matter and nothing else. A dog is matter and something else as well. So is a child.

What thinks, feels, and can be good, we call *Spirit.* A dog is both spirit and matter. So is a child.

[Some things that have animal life cannot think, feel, or be good, nearly so much as a dog. Most likely they cannot think or be good *at all*, only feel; for example, a worm, a sea-anemone. We say that everything which can feel, even if it cannot think or be good, has *consciousness*, is *conscious;* the dog's consciousness is much higher than the worm's, the child's or man's is much higher than the dog's. Human beings—those who have human life—can *think about their own thinking and feeling and being good.* This is called *self-consciousness.* Most likely dogs have no self-consciousness, and it belongs to nothing lower than human life.]

*** This paragraph in square brackets is difficult. If it can be taught clearly, it will be very useful. If it cannot be taught quite clearly, leave it out altogether.

When Spirit is so high and powerful that it could go on living—thinking, feeling, and being good—without the matter that is with it, without body, we call it soul.

We do not know whether dogs and other animals have souls or not.

We believe that human beings have souls.

When we come to think of it, the matter that makes up the human being is not really the child or the man himself. It only *belongs* to the child or the man. It is *his*, like his clothes and his tools. The real child or man himself is the *soul*—that which thinks, feels, and can be good.

When I say "I am cold," it would do just as well to say "my hands are cold," or, "my whole body is cold." When I say, "I am bleeding," it would do just as well to say, "My finger (my leg) is bleeding." It is not *I* that am bleeding, but my body. But when I say, "I think it is Tuesday," it will not do to alter it to "my hand (or my head) thinks." It is *I* that think. *I* am my soul. My body is not *I;* it is *mine.*

If a man loses his power of thinking, we say, "He is not all there;" but we do not say so if he loses his leg. If a man lets passion overcome him, and seems to lose all power of being good, we say, "He is not himself;" but we do not say so if he only loses the power of moving about or of making a noise. Men *are* souls and *have* bodies.

Lesson V.

Recapitulation :—Matter. Pebble and acorn are matter only. Dog and child are something more than matter.

Spirit. [Higher and lower degrees of consciousness. Self-consciousness.]

Soul is spirit that can exist without matter [self-existent spirit].

We *have* bodies; but we *are* souls.

Continuation :—The dog can think a little, and it can make us know some of its thinking. When it growls (wags its tail, howls, &c.) we know it is angry (happy, unhappy, &c.). Putting our thought into some one else's mind is called *communication.* We can "communicate" our thoughts much better [with more variety and delicacy] than the dog. The commonest way is by making sounds with tongue and teeth. I think something; then I move tongue, teeth, lips, and they make the air move in some particular ways; then the air strikes a little drum in your ear a great many times in some particular ways, then you hear some particular sounds; then those sounds make you think

what I was thinking. I have *given you my thought* (communicated my thought to you).

Other ways of giving our thoughts to other people, putting them into another mind. To a deaf person, finger-language. Sound-language more useful than sight-language, because it can be used in the dark, or when the person is not looking at you. Sight-language for people far away: writing, printing, electric telegraph, semaphore telegraph, signalling at sea [called "speaking"], &c. Sound-language for people too far off for lip-speaking:—bell, gong, cannon, fog-signal, telephone, &c. All these are "communications," put thoughts out of one mind into others. (Scholars must tell you *what* thoughts.)

All kinds of communication so far have to be *learnt* before they are understood [artificial, conventional]. Others are so simple that we understand them without, or almost without, learning [natural, instinctive, intuitive]:—beckoning, pointing, sighing, crying, laughing, wringing the hands, smiling, &c.

Some kinds of communication are understood even by a baby. The mother's smile puts contentment, feeling of safety, into the baby's mind. Baby can read *love* in mother's eyes. Baby cries in

the dark at night: mother's arm steals round it: puts feeling of contentment, safety into it. Baby does not understand nearly *all* that that look or movement is the sign of, but understands *enough* to feel comfort.

All these kinds of communication give a thought to another. If I give a *shilling* to another, I have a shilling less myself, lose a shilling. If I give a *light* to another, I have just as much light left myself, lose nothing. Giving my thought to another is like giving the light, not the shilling. If I give a shilling each to twenty people, I lose a pound; if a light to each of twenty people, I lose no light: my thought to each of twenty people, I lose no thought.

Lesson VI.

Recapitulation:—Putting our thought into other people's minds, communication. We can communicate better than a dog. Dogs' communications.

Communication by tongue and teeth.

Sound-language and sight-language for those near.

Sound-language and sight-language for those far off.

[Artificial, conventional communication; natural, instinctive, intuitive communication.]

Mother's communication with her baby.

Giving a thought like giving a light.

CONTINUATION:—So far we have only spoken of communications which we ourselves make, or communications which are made to us by creatures inferior to us (the dog, &c.), or by those like ourselves (human beings): we will presently speak of communications which we receive from a Being superior to us.

[But, first, observe this: our souls, as we have seen, have three powers—thinking, feeling, and being good (or bad). Now, in *thinking*, we are said to exercise our INTELLECT; in *feeling*, our EMOTIONS; in *being good* (or bad), doing right (or wrong), our WILL. The soul has *intellectual* power, *emotional* power, and power of *will* (*moral* power). We shall find that communications from a Being superior to ourselves are addressed to *each* of these powers (faculties) of the soul.]

*** The above paragraph in brackets is difficult, and should only be taught to scholars who can be made clearly to understand and accurately to remember the distinction pointed out and the terms

employed in it. To such, however, it will prove useful, giving them greater precision in apprehending the succeeding Lessons.

[Communications to the Will or Moral Power: (It will be most convenient to take these first.)]

Suppose an assistant in a shop is late in leaving, and every one else has gone before him. As he is passing out, he catches sight of a sovereign lying in a chink of the floor. He is very poor, and a sovereign would be a great help to him and his family. He is quite sure, from the dust, that it has been there a long time, and that no one can possibly find him out if he takes it; so he has not the least fear of punishment. He eagerly seizes it, and for one moment thinks he will keep it. *But he does not.* WHY NOT?

Because there comes to him suddenly, clearly, forcibly, awfully, something saying to his soul, "DON'T."

That "*Don't*" is not from himself, for he was all set on taking the sovereign. It comes right against the whole current of his thinking, and feeling, and willing. It must be the voice of some Being that is present and sees him. We call that Being "GOD." God has communicated straight with his soul.

So he takes up the sovereign carefully and seeks

the master and gives it up till the rightful owner can be found; he goes right against his own interests just because of that "Don't."

With younger scholars you should give many examples of this voice of God,—*e.g.* Story of little Theodore Parker checked from killing the tortoise.* When your scholar is on the point of striking a little brother, the "Don't" sounds in his soul and he drops his arm; when about to look at the answer to a sum; when about to disobey his mother, &c., &c. But carefully confine yourself as yet to the voice of God *warning*,—checking the will when about to commit sin.

Thus the voice of God *warns* us against wrong-doing.

Lesson VII.

Recapitulation:—Communication. Revert to the mother's communication to her baby (Lesson V.), as this is the best type of God's communication to us. It is direct from soul to soul, with hardly any *apparatus*, only the look in the eye and the touch of the hand.

* Peter Dean's Life of Theodore Parker, p. 6; or Frothingham's Life.

Communications from an inferior being (dog); from man; from a superior Being.

[We think by the action of the Intellect; feel by that of the Emotions; act, do, are good (or bad), do right (or wrong) by that of the Will (moral power).]

The voice of *warning*, "*Don't*," before wrong-doing. We feel that it is not we ourselves that utter it, but *Some One else*. We call that Being, GOD.

CONTINUATION:—Suppose the shop-assistant did not heed the voice that said "*Don't*" in his soul, and *did* take the sovereign. He spends it on good food and clothes; he is warm and comfortable; he feels safe never to be found out. And *yet*,—yet something keeps being said to his soul that prevents him from being happy. He tries not to hear it, to stop it from speaking; but he cannot, because it is not *his* voice that is speaking, though he knows that it is right. It is the voice of some Being who is present and sees him and reads his heart; the voice of the same Being that spoke the "Don't" before, now saying, "Shame on you." We call that Being, "GOD;" and in spite of the man's

efforts to silence him, God persists in speaking to his soul.

Thus the voice of God not only *warns* us when we *are about* to do wrong, but *rebukes* us when we *have* done wrong.

[With younger scholars multiply illustrations, even if you have to divide this Lesson into two. Every step must be vividly apprehended before you lead the scholar on to the next.]

But now suppose, instead of having a temptation to do wrong, you have an opportunity to do right:—

You are running home from school along a lonely road, very hungry and in a hurry for dinner. But you see a little girl under the hedge, crying bitterly and calling for "mother." She has lost herself. You know she lives half a mile out of your road. You might take her hand and lead her home, but then you will lose your dinner. You are just resolving that you will not help her, when a voice sounds in your soul, "Do." You yourself were all set the other way; but this voice is not your voice; it goes right against the voice of your own wish. It is the voice of some Being who is present and sees you. We call that Being, "God."

You feel that that voice has a right to command you; you obey, and take the child home.

Again, you see a worm (caterpillar) in the path, where it may be trodden on. You dislike touching it, and pass on. But the Voice says, "*Do;*" and you *have* to go back and pick it up and put it in safety.

[With younger scholars multiply illustrations. Voice of God saying, "*Do* your work," when you wish to play; saying, "Help your mother," when you wish to read, &c.]

To EXHORT is to bid to do a thing that is good.

Thus the voice of God not only *warns* us when we are about to do *wrong*, and *rebukes* us when we *have* done *wrong*, but also EXHORTS us when we have an opportunity to do *right*.

LESSON VIII.

RECAPITULATION:—God's voice in *warning*, before wrong-doing.

God's voice in *rebuke*, after wrong-doing;

God's voice in *exhortation*, before right-doing.

All these are God *communicating* to us, putting thoughts into us, just as truly as I am communicating thought to you when I say

"Come" or "Go;" or as the mother communicates feeling of content to the baby by the look in her eyes.

CONTINUATION:—Suppose you obey the Voice that says to your soul, "*Do*" take that little girl home. You have to go back to school without your dinner, and you feel very hungry and uncomfortable. And yet something keeps being said to your soul that makes you feel *glad* you did it. It is not *your* voice that is speaking. It is the voice of some Being who is present and saw the struggle in your heart, the voice of the same Being that spoke the "Do" before, now saying, "Well done." We call that Being, GOD; and whenever men bravely do the right, he utters peace to their souls. [With younger scholars, multiply illustrations.]

Thus the voice of God not only *warns* us when we are about to do wrong, and *rebukes* us when we have done wrong, and *exhorts* us when we have opportunity of doing right, but also utters APPROVAL to us when we have done right.

The voice of God in warning, in rebuke, in exhortation, and in approval, is called CONSCIENCE. That which conscience bids us do is called *Duty*

(Right). It is *due*. That which conscience forbids us to do is called *Sin* (Wrong).

[If you go to live by a running stream, at first you are always hearing the sound of the water. But when you get accustomed to it, you leave off being conscious of it. Still, the stream will go on running.]

If a bell is rung to wake you every morning and you always get up at once, you will always hear it; but if you do not heed it, you will soon *leave off hearing* it. Still, the bell will go on ringing every morning.

If you always obey God's voice in conscience, warning or exhorting, you will always hear it; but if you do not heed it, you will gradually LEAVE OFF HEARING IT. Still, God will go on speaking always.

They who habitually obey conscience may have many pains and sorrows; still, they always have the voice of approval speaking to them, and peace is in their hearts.

They who habitually disobey conscience can have no peace.

[Conscience (this fourfold voice of God) is addressed to the Will (the Moral faculty). We shall

go on to other voices of God (communications from God) addressed to the *Emotions and the Intellect.*]

Lesson IX.

Recapitulation:—God's voice in *warning* and *rebuke* before and after wrong-doing. God's voice in *exhortation* and *approval* before and after right-doing. Conscience; Duty; Sin.

[Running stream;] morning bell; conscience heeded or unheeded. God never ceases speaking.

Habit of obedience brings peace; disobedience incompatible with peace. [Conscience addressed to the Will.]

Continuation:—[Communications addressed to the Emotions:]—You have been worried, or vexed, or put out of spirits by something some one has said or done, and you feel as if things were all wrong. But you go out into the still night-air, and, looking up, see the whole heaven lit up with stars. Immediately, the worry and vexation seem to slip away from you. You are suddenly at rest, and feel that, after all, at the bottom, things are all right. *Why* do you feel thus? If you examine

your heart, you will find that it is because a feeling has come over you that there is a good Power surrounding you under whose care all is well. This feeling does not come to you by your own thinking, but of itself as if from outside. It is *communicated* to you by that very Power whose presence and protection you feel. And we call that Power, "GOD." What God seems to say through the starry heaven is, "I am strong and good."

[Among *young children* it is only some that will give a response to the above appeal to the religious sense. If you fail to win from them a response to this recognition of the voice of God in the starry heaven, you may get it from them in connection with some one or other of the methods of God's revelation of himself which are detailed below. If you fail to obtain any genuine response, you must tell them that if they habitually heed the voice of God in conscience, then they are likely gradually to grow to be able to hear God's voice in the sublime and beautiful. To many *young men*, and still more *young women*, even though of meagre intellectual culture, you will find that this appeal unmistakably comes home.]

Other things, also, that are beautiful or sublime

seem like the words of God saying to us, "I am strong and good," and bring us the feeling of peace and safety and of being cared for, as well as the starry heaven. Some are so made that they feel God more distinctly in one thing, some in another. The moon, sunset, blue sky, mountains, the sea, a lake, meadows, trees, flowers, music, song, little children's faces, &c. [Draw your scholars to feel the divine beauty and eloquence of one or more of these things as much as you can. Be careful to remember that *this* Lesson refers to the unreasoning (but not unreasonable) *feeling* of a divine presence and care awakened in us by the beautiful and sublime, and not to any *intellectual argument* that these things must be *caused* by God. That comes in the next Lesson.]

We will call this "God's voice through things sublime or beautiful."

God's voice in conscience may always be heard by all people clearly. God's voice through things sublime or beautiful is heard much more clearly at some moments than at others, and much more clearly by some people than by others. Some very good people but seldom and but faintly feel the presence of God in things sublime and beautiful.

Lesson X.

Recapitulation :—God's voice in conscience [addressed to the Will].

God's voice in things sublime or beautiful [addressed to the Emotions].

Effect of the starry heaven on a disturbed spirit makes you *feel* the presence of a Power that is strong and good. We call that Power "God." Other sights or sounds sublime or beautiful.

God's voice in conscience may be heard constantly by all; this other voice varies with the individual and the moment.

Continuation :—[We have spoken of how God declares himself to the Will and the Emotions. We must now speak of how He declares himself to the other faculty of the soul, the Intellect.]

If you saw a new set of pictures hung all round the school-room walls, what would your first question be? Probably, "Who put them there?" If I answered, "The step-ladder and the hammer and the nails put them there," you would not be satisfied. Why not? Because you know that *a person* must have used the ladder and hammer and nails;

that is, you know that they must have been put there by some one's *Will*, and that those other things, and even the feet that climbed the ladder and the hand that held the hammer, could only be the *instruments* of that Will; they could do nothing of themselves.

So, if a new house is built, or a railway laid, or a book written, or a picture painted, or a garden planted, you know that the stones, or the iron rails, or the paper and print, or the colours, or the plants, have not come together of themselves. They have neither animal nor human life, have no Spirit, and therefore have no Will; and nothing can be done or made except by Will.

The Will that does or makes anything is called the *Cause* of it. We can never think of anything being done without a *Cause* that has done it. [Everything that happens or is done is called an *Effect*, and there is no effect without a cause.]

We are never satisfied without finding some Will as the cause of what we observe.

When you leave the school you fall down in the street, and I ask the *cause*, knowing there must be *some* cause. If I am told that a man knocked you down, I am satisfied that he was the cause, for the

man has Will. But if I am told that you stumbled over an iron spike fixed in the path, I want a cause further back, and I do not feel that I have got at the *real* cause till I know *who* fixed the spike there; he is the real cause of your fall.

If a carriage is smashed and the driver is killed, you may tell me that the horse kicked it to pieces. That quite explains it, for the horse has Will and can be a real cause. But if you tell me that the axle was of weak iron and broke, I ask who built the carriage and put in the weak axle; and I call *him* the real cause of the driver's death.

Now, when we ask the causes of all the things which we observe to be or to happen, we find that men and animals are the cause of a great many of them, through their *Wills.* But we observe far more things of which we know that neither men nor animals are the cause—the rising and setting of the sun, the growing of the grass, the blowing of the winds, the beating of the waves, the very existence of the world and stars and men. We cannot help thinking that they, too, have their Cause, and that cause must be a Will.

We call that Will, that *Great First Cause,* "GOD."

This is God's third way of declaring himself to

us [through the Intellect], through our *thinking*, which forces us to seek a *Cause* for everything.

Thus God declares himself to us through conscience, through things sublime and beautiful, and through our thinking that the whole universe and all its movements must have a Cause. [Will, Emotions, Intellect.]

*** So far we have discussed the primary grounds of Theism. In the second Part we deal with other matter. Let the teacher not overlook the fact that almost every statement, save those of mere definition, in the above Lessons may be elicited from an intelligent scholar by skilful and thoughtful *questioning* on his part. Much of the above will be worthless if used in any other way. Wherever I have used square brackets [ ], I have wished the teacher carefully to consider whether it will be useful to put what is contained between them before his scholars.

PART II.

The following warnings to the Teacher are repeated:—These Lessons can only be taught to a quiet class; they cannot be taught profitably unless you adopt the *questioning* method; parts of them—you yourself must judge which parts—are not suitable for the younger or less intelligent classes; they cannot be taught profitably unless you yourself read and digest each series of Lessons, as a whole, before you begin to teach the first Lesson in the series.

Lesson XI.

Recapitulatory Lesson:—

Things lifeless, Vegetable Life, Animal Life, Human Life:—what each has or is which the one before it is without.

The powers [faculties] of Man compared with those of the Dog, especially the powers of

Thinking, Feeling, and being Good [Intellectual, Emotional, and Moral powers (power of Will)].

Spirit and Body. We *are* Spirits, but *have* Bodies. Soul.

Power of Communication:—Men's ways of communicating to one another. God's ways of communicating to men:—Fourfold communication addressed to Moral Power (Voice of Conscience warning, rebuking, exhorting, approving); communication addressed to the Feeling or Emotional Power (God's Voice through things sublime or beautiful); communication addressed to the Thinking or Intellectual Power (God's Voice declaring himself as Cause).

*** The above Lesson may, of course, be omitted if you think your scholars have already thoroughly mastered the preceding series. But it will be good for them, if they have not previously done so, to take a general view, a *coup d'œil*, of all that has hitherto been taught, so as to perceive the relations of the whole and the proportion of the parts.

Lesson XII.

Recapitulation :—One or two testing questions on what has been taught should now be sufficient before proceeding to the

Continuation :—We have seen (Lesson X.) that by God's third voice to us he declares himself to be the *Cause* of all those things of which no other Will is the Cause. This voice has not always been so clearly understood. In old times men felt, indeed, that everything that happens must have a Will for its Cause; but they thought there were ever so many different Wills acting as Causes.

When they saw the sun crossing the sky, they knew it must be moved by some one's Will; but some of them [*e.g.* the Greeks] thought it was the wheel of a fiery chariot which some great Being was driving across the sky.

When they saw the rain dropping from the clouds, they knew it must be sent down by some Will; but some of them [the Hindus] thought that the clouds were really cows, and that some great being was milking them, and that the rain was the milk dropping down.

When they saw an avalanche loosened from the

snow-ridge and tumbling down to destroy a village, they knew it must be hurled down by some Will; but they thought, perhaps, that some great Being who lived on the mountain-height bowled it down to kill his enemies in the valley, or for the sport of seeing it roll down the slope.

When they saw the trees of the forest bending to the roaring wind, they knew some Will must be bending the huge boughs; but they thought, perhaps, that it was some great Being who lived in the wood that was beating them down with his heavy hand.

They called these different beings "gods;" but on their lips that name clearly did not mean anything so great and beautiful and good as we have seen the word "God" to stand for among us.

[A still more primitive stage of religious belief than the Polytheism described above is *Fetichism*. The Fetichist believed (believes now among some barbarous races) that the sun, the tree, even the stick and the stone, have Wills *of their own*, and exercise them when they move. It is a considerable advance from Fetichism to Polytheism, removing the Will from the thing itself to an unseen Being acting on the thing.]

*** The above paragraph is essential to an accurate sketch of the historical development of religious belief; but such is not the primary purpose of these Lessons, and it will be much better to omit the paragraph than to confuse the minds of the scholars.

[In the course of time men gradually came to feel that all the different movements of the heavenly bodies, and the rains and winds and all the things on earth, work together so harmoniously that they must all be the working of *one* Will. At the same time scientific men have shown that all the movements that seemed so irregular, really go on always in accordance with perfectly regular and unchanging rules or methods (called "Laws of Nature"); and this makes us feel all the more sure that *one* Will only is the Cause of all of them. So our belief in *Cause* now unites with what we hear in the voice of God in Conscience and in the voice of God through things sublime or beautiful, to make us believe that there are not many gods, but one God only.]

*** The above paragraph can hardly be taught to very young scholars. It will be enough to say to them that we now have given up the belief in many gods as causes of the things that happen, and

believe in One God greater and wiser than all the many gods that men used to believe in put together.

Those who believe in many gods are called "Polytheists." (*Poly* is Greek for *many*, and *theo* is Greek for *god*).

Those who believe in One God are called "Monotheists." (*Mono*, Greek for *one*; *theo*, for *God*.)

The belief in many gods is called "Polytheism"; the belief in One God is called "Monotheism."

In olden times the Hindus, Greeks, Romans, Scandinavians, Britons, &c., were Polytheists; and now many of the peoples of Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, &c., are so [while others have not yet got beyond Fetichism].

We are Monotheists.

Child-races of men are Polytheistic [infant-races are Fetichistic]; grown-up races are Monotheistic; just as children often believe in fairies, but grown-up people know that God does what they used to think the fairies did.

Lesson XIII.

Recapitulation:—Ancients knew that all things that happened [*phenomena*, Greek for "what is seen"], must have Will for their Cause,

but believed there were many Wills acting in sky and earth and sea as Causes, many gods.

[But the harmony of nature and the regularity of law point to the belief in One Will only ruling nature, One God.]

Ancients and sundry races now, Polytheists; but we are Monotheists.

Polytheism belongs to races in their childhood; Monotheism to grown-up races.

CONTINUATION:—We have seen that in three ways God communicates to us and makes us know him; he declares himself through conscience, through things sublime or beautiful, and through cause. We have now to go on to another way he has of communicating to us,—of making us know and feel him.

It is the *answer* that he gives us when we speak to him.

Our speaking to God is called *Prayer*.

We know that God hears our prayer, because we *get his answer*:

When you are tempted to do wrong, if you sincerely ask God to make you strong to do the right, *strength comes to you.* When you are cast down in

spirit and you earnestly pray to God to give you a cheerful courage, *it comes to you.* When you are inclined to be fretful and ill-tempered, and you earnestly pray to God to give you serenity of spirit, *it comes to you.* This is God's *answer* to prayer, and it is a fourth way in which God communicates to us.

So far we have only mentioned such speaking to God as is *asking* for something. But there are other ways of speaking to him (praying); we may *tell* him things, or we may *thank* him for what he does for us or others.

We have seen (Lesson V.) that there are a great many different ways of making communications. In prayer, *any* way of communication will do, because God understands the very thoughts and feelings themselves. The use of our *expressing* them is to make *us feel* that we are really speaking them to God. So, a congregation may speak their prayer aloud, that they may all feel that they are speaking to God together. You in your chamber may whisper your prayer, but God understands it just the same. A deaf and dumb man may speak his prayer in finger-language, because that may best make him feel that he is really speaking it to God.

Or we may even make *no* sound or movement in our prayer, but only *think it to God.* The *answer* comes just the same, and so we know that God has understood.

Lesson XIV.

Recapitulation:—God communicates to us in a fourth way by giving *answer* to our speaking to him, Prayer. Prayer in temptation, dejection, fretful mood, and its answer. Prayer may be *asking, telling, thanking.*

The way of communication in Prayer may be aloud, by whisper, in silence, &c. It is the thought or feeling itself addressed to God that he really reads, which is the real Prayer; and this receives the answer.

Continuation:—Some people—especially those belonging to child-races (Lesson XII.)—have expressed their prayers by *offering* something to their god, a lamb, a pair of pigeons, part of their crops, even their child. Sometimes they mean this to *tell* their god how sorry they are for their sins, and to *ask* him to bless them again; sometimes to *thank* him for the blessings he has given them; sometimes they make their offerings for other purposes. Such offerings are real prayers, if they are sincere.

Sometimes we have thoughts or feelings which we cannot find words to communicate to our fellow-men, and we can only express them by looks (intense horror, transcendent joy, deep love, &c.). Sometimes we have such as we cannot communicate to them in *any* way, and can *never* make them understand (aspirations, self-condemnation, &c.). But God always understands. We have only to think or feel these *to God*, and they are prayer, even though we can find no expression for them.

We have seen that prayer may be *asking*:—The askings which we have spoken of so far (Lesson XIII.) are all *spiritual* askings, that is, they are askings for some help to us as spirits, souls. But people—especially those belonging to child-races—have always made *material* askings, too, in their prayers, that is, have asked for some changes in matter, for wealth, herds, many children (so, Hindus), rain, sunshine, health (prayers for recovery of Prince of Wales). Are these *right* prayers?

We have seen (Lesson XII.; but that paragraph was only for the more advanced scholars) that God rules the heavens and earth in accordance with regular and unchanging laws. Therefore, it is not likely that he will change anything in the heavens

or earth because we ask him. Moreover, we find that, as a matter of fact, however earnestly we ask him for rain (sunshine, health, wealth), very often the rain (sunshine, &c.) still does not come. So it does not seem that he answers such prayers. Moreover, he knows best whether rain (sunshine, &c.) is *best* or not; so, even if our prayers could bring it, it would still be best to leave it to him. Is it always *wrong*, then, to make material askings in our prayers? Think it over before next time, keeping the thought in your mind that God is like our *Father*, and we are like his *children*.

Lesson XV.

Recapitulation:—Prayers by offering.

Feelings or thoughts that we do not know how to express. To man we can never tell them. But if we think or feel them *to God*, they are prayer; he understands and answers.

Material askings in prayer. Are they right? God rules material things by regular laws; moreover, he knows best. Are such prayers, then, always wrong?

Continuation:—When you were very young, perhaps you would ask your father for *anything*

which you thought you would like (toys, cakes, money, &c.). But he only *gave* you just what he thought it was good that you should have. Still, he was not *angry* with you for asking; it was not *wrong*. As you grew older and knew your father better and better, you more and more left off asking him for these things, finding out that he never gave you them for the asking, and that you might trust him to give you whatever his love and wisdom saw to be good for you without your asking.

So, children (and child-races) ask God for anything they think they should like (health, wealth, rain, sunshine, even toys, &c.). But he only *gives* them what it is good that they should have. Still, it is not *wrong* of them to ask, and he does not *rebuke* them. As they grow older and know God better and better, they more and more leave off asking him for such things, finding out that he does not give them in answer to prayer, and that they may trust him to give whatever of such things his love and wisdom see to be good for them, without their asking.

Still, even little children should always trust their father, and, even in asking, feel that it is only if it seems good to him.

So, those who make material askings to God should always trust him, and make "if Thou seest good" ("if it be thy will"), part of their prayer.

[Unhappily, the fathers of some of your scholars may be bad or foolish fathers. You must judge how far it is safe to press on them this, Christ's own similitude of God's relation to us. Perhaps "mother" may be a more helpful simile than "father."]

Our *asking* in prayer will grow less material and more spiritual the more we know and trust God.

Is it right to make prayers of asking *for others* [intercession]? A good father would never be displeased at his child asking him to help his brother. Just so, God can never disapprove of our asking him to bless others. But we must remember all the while that he knows better than we what is good for them, and loves them far better than we can love.

But our prayers may be prayers of *telling*. That which we need to *tell* to God is our wrong-doing and our sorrow for it (confession). It is not that God does not *know* it before we tell, for it is he that by his rebuke (in conscience) has made us sorry. But it does us good to tell him, because it

makes us feel more clearly how sad it is. Then, after *telling* (confessing) our sin, we must *ask* God to help us to keep from it for the future.

*** Some temperaments feel the need of confession in prayer more strongly and constantly than others. Both may belong to equally good and religious people. In talking on this, as on all the rest of these religious realities, to the children, you must be guided by your own personal experience. When that which is presented as a spiritual truth in these Lessons answers to no experience of your own, *leave it out.* You can only awaken in your scholars such religion as is *real to you.*

Lesson XVI.

Recapitulation:—Asking material gifts from God like asking them from a wise and loving father; not wrong, yet he knows and does best, and the more we know and trust him the less we shall ask them.

Prayers of *telling* (confession).

Continuation:—But our prayers may also be prayers of *thanking.* The more we grow to know and feel God, the more will our prayers come to be thanksgiving. We shall come to feel the world

and life so full of his goodness that we cannot keep from speaking our thankfulness to him. We may thank him both for the *material* (thanksgiving at table, "grace") and for the *spiritual* blessings he gives us.

We may pray at all times and in all places, and whatever we are doing, if it is not wrong. All thinking and feeling *to God* is prayer. The best men LIVE *to God*, and so all their life is a prayer. When man is communicating to God and God to man, man is said to be in *communion* with God. The man who *lives* to God, ceases not to hear his various voices. He *lives* in communion with God.

[We have seen (Lesson V.) that even the baby can understand the communications of love that come to it from its mother. By and by, however, the infant begins to know that the mother is a great deal *more* besides the love which she communicates to it, and even that there are parts of its mother's nature which it can never wholly know or understand. But that is no reason for doubting the truthfulness of the communication that came to it of its mother's love, or the reality of that love. The mother is the fountain of maternal love and

care, only she is much more as well. Just so, we can understand God's many voices of communication to us. Grown-up, thoughtful people (and grown-up, thoughtful races of men), however, begin to know that God must be immeasurably MORE besides that which he communicates to us, and to perceive that there must be boundless heights and depths of his nature of which they can *never know or understand anything at all.* But that is no reason for them to doubt the truthfulness of the communications that come to them from him, or the reality of his love. He is the Fountain of paternal love and care, only he is infinitely more as well.]

*** If the older and more thoughtful scholars can be made to apprehend the above, it will be good. They will find, when they come to read the thoughtful literature of the day, that many people shrink from speaking of a "*personal* God," because they think it is making God like man. It does not much matter whether we apply the word "person" to him or not; the thing to keep clear in our mind is, that, if we do not like to do so, it is because God is *more* than "person," not *less.* We know God does communicate with us in ways that we men can

understand. All the infinity that is in him besides, does not take that away.

Lesson XVII.

Recapitulation :—Prayer should grow more and more into thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for the material and the spiritual.

We may pray in every time and place. *Living* to God. Communion.

[God infinitely more than that which we can know. But this does not make him less that which we do know.]

Continuation :—Those who hear God's voices (apprehend God's communications) often feel moved to *declare them to others.* Doing so is called *preaching.* Those who hear (apprehend) them *habitually* and *very clearly* and are *profoundly impressed* by them are often most powerfully impelled to declare them to others. When these do so, they are said to *prophesy;* they are called "Prophets." [Greek: "*one who speaks* (*phet*) *instead of* (*pro*) another," that is, instead of *God*, telling us what God tells him, God's messenger, interpreter.]

When we hear (or read) the words of a Prophet, how shall we know whether he is a *real* Prophet

(whether he is truly speaking to us that which God speaks to him)?

Suppose you are sitting far back in a big church (or standing at the outside of a crowd in the open air). You are a little deaf ("dull of hearing"). Some one is speaking to the congregation (crowd). You cannot clearly make out what it is that he keeps repeating. Some one beside you, *who is not so dull of hearing as you*, tells you that what he is saying is, "God is love." *Then* immediately—the moment it is *suggested* to you—*you* hear it quite clearly; you say to yourself, "Ah! yes, that is what he keeps saying;" and you know that your neighbour has told you truly what are the words of the distant voice.

Just so, you are one of a vast host on this earth. The voice of God is uttered to you and all the rest. But you are *deaf* to much that God says (your soul is dull of understanding). You cannot make out all that God is saying. But the *Prophet* here on earth beside you says to you, "What God says is (thus saith the Lord), 'I love the right' ('I hate the wrong,' 'I am strong and good,' 'I will care for you,' 'I am Love,' &c.):" for the Prophet's soul hears God's word more clearly than you. *Then* imme-

diately—the moment it is *suggested* to you—*you* hear it in your soul quite clearly; you say to yourself, "Ah! yes, that is God's word;" and you know that the Prophet has been a real Prophet, has prophesied truly.

Unless you thus *recognize* God's voice in what the Prophet declares, you cannot know him to be a true Prophet. If ever one, who you are told is a Prophet, declares what is *contradictory* to what God himself says to you *beyond all possibility of mistake* by any of his voices, you may be certain that in that he is not prophesying truly.

Lesson XVIII.

Recapitulation:—Preaching, Prophesying, Prophets.

How discriminate a true Prophet?

Can only know the Prophet's word to be true, when you feel that he is declaring the word God speaks to you too.

He who declares in God's name what you feel to be contradictory to that which God himself speaks to you, is not truly prophesying.

Continuation:—Some Prophets are much greater than others. There is no sharp line dividing Pro-

phets from other religious teachers (preachers). All that we can say is, that he who apprehends God's communications *very vividly*, and declares them to others *with intense earnestness*, is a Prophet. There have been Prophets in many ages and lands. (Zoroaster, founder of the Parsees' religion, Mohammed [?] among the Arabs, Keshub Chunder Sen [?] now among the Hindus, &c.). The most extraordinary group of Prophets that ever lived were the Hebrew Prophets (Prophets of Israel), Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah, &c. And the greatest Prophet of all was the Hebrew, JESUS of Nazareth.

Jesus seems to have *lived altogether to God*, to have heard all God's voices *constantly*, and to have loved *all men* (Lesson III.) so deeply, that he declared God's word to them with the *intensest earnestness*. His *life*, during the latter part of it at any rate, was one prayer, one communion, one prophesying.

The thing Jesus taught most earnestly and constantly was that *God is like a* FATHER *to us*. He helped men to hear and understand God's voice, declaring his goodness and loving-kindness. He did not prophesy by lip-speaking only. His very

life was language (Lesson V.), communicating his feeling of God's presence and his love; and he made others feel it too; makes us feel it when we read his words and deeds. He declared to men and helped them to recognize the very most precious thing that God is saying to us all, that he is as *a perfect* FATHER *to us.*

Feeling God like a Father made him feel all men like his brothers. So his teaching is, that we are all to be like brothers and sisters to each other, and children of the Heavenly Father.

This teaching of Jesus is called CHRISTIANITY [because men called Jesus, *Christ*, Greek for "anointed" (king)]. Those who accept it are called "*Christians.*"

LESSON XIX.

RECAPITULATION:—The Prophet differs from the ordinary sincere religious teacher in *degree*, not in *kind.*

Hebrew and other Prophets.

JESUS, greatest of Prophets. How he lived. What he taught. *Christianity, Christians.*

CONTINUATION:—[Many people think that *Christianity* is certain beliefs about Jesus Christ. But it really is what Jesus taught of God and man.]

How do we know about the Hebrew Prophets, Jesus, and their respective teachings? Many of their words and many particulars concerning their lives have been preserved in ancient writings. Those writings which relate chiefly to the earlier Prophets [and also the history of Israel up to and in their times] are called *The Old Testament.* Those writings which relate chiefly to Jesus and his teachings [as understood and told by his followers during the first century or so after his death] are called *The New Testament.* We call the Old and New Testaments together "THE BIBLE" (Greek, Biblia, books, or *the book*).

Great teachers are always much misunderstood at the time. Moreover, *all* histories [especially those belonging to early times] are sure to contain many mistakes. Therefore, the Bible contains many misunderstandings and mistakes concerning the Hebrew Prophets, and Jesus, and their teachings. Still, it contains a great deal of their real teachings, and a great deal of real information about them. It contains so much teaching which we feel to be beautiful and true [because it suggests to us, and makes us clearly hear and understand what God is saying *to us* (Lesson XVII.)], that we

find it to be, on the whole, the best and most precious book we know.

There are other books in the world like the Bible in this, that they contain the words of ancient Prophets, who have been the religious teachers of vast numbers of men (the Vedas of the Hindus, the Zendavesta of the Parsees, the Koran of the Mohammedans, &c.). But in all of these [as in the Bible also in less degree] we find much that we cannot feel to be what God really says (true prophesyings) (Lesson XVII.). We must try each of them by seeing how far it suggests to us what we can feel to be that which God really says (the true word of God); so trying, we shall find much of the true word of God in *all* of these, but *by far the* MOST *in the Bible.*

RELIGION is the *feeling* of dependence on that which is felt to be far higher and better than ourselves.

The religion of those who have recognized the voices of *God* and believe them, is their *feeling of dependence on God.* What we believe through our *thinking* power (Lesson VI.) concerning that God whom we feel to be over us, is called our "*Theological* Belief" (theology; Greek, *theo,* God, and *logo,*

reasoning). [The *feeling* of, and the *intellectual* belief in, God together are called "*Theism.*" All *Christians* (Lesson XVIII.) are Theists.]

Lesson XX.

Recapitulation:—[Real definition of Christianity.]

Old Testament; New Testament; *Bible.*

Errors of contemporary misunderstanding and of subsequent mistake in Bible; truthfulness and value nevertheless.

Other books incorporating prophetic matter.

Definitions of Religion, Theological Belief (Theology) [and Theism].

Continuation:—Having Authority means *having the right to be obeyed or believed. The authorities* are those who have a right to be obeyed (Parliament, the managers of a school, parents). *An authority* is one who has a right to be believed. You are an *authority* on the question what you had for breakfast this morning, because you must know, and so have a right to be believed; but I am not, for I can only guess. I am an *authority* on the question where I was last Wednesday evening, but you are not. Dr. Carpenter is an *authority* on

the nature of human bones, skin, blood, &c., because he has thoroughly studied the subject. (Tyndall is an authority on light, Max Müller on language, Dr. Martineau on mental philosophy, &c.) If possible, find an instance of some high authority on some branch of study, whom the scholars themselves know to be so, *e.g.* some one who has delivered a lecture in the school.

Who has a right to be believed about *God?* None has that right absolutely except *God himself* speaking to us. God himself is the great [the sole ultimate] Authority in regard to himself and his relation to us.

Men are often told that they must accept some particular theological belief *on the authority* of an ancient Prophet (Isaiah, Amos, &c.), of Jesus, of the Bible, [of Mohammed, the Koran, the Vedas, the Church, the Pope, &c.]. But the *way we know* Isaiah, Jesus, &c., to prophesy truly (the Bible to contain true prophesyings) is by recognizing that God speaks those very things to us (Lesson XVII.). Therefore, *if* we do not recognize that what they tell us *is* what God speaks, we cannot know that they are prophesying truly; therefore, we cannot know that they have a right to be believed in what

they are telling us; therefore, *for us* and *on that* they *have not authority*. The way to express this shortly, is to say, "We cannot take religion on authority" (meaning, any *other* authority than that of God speaking to us ourselves).

Lesson XXI.

Recapitulation:—"Having authority;" "the authorities;" "an authority."

God is the great [sole ultimate] authority in religion.

Claim of authority for Prophets, Bible, &c. Its fallacy. Precise meaning of phrase, "We cannot take religion on authority."

Continuation:—*Nevertheless*, when one whom we find in other things to be a real Prophet, and perceive to be living to God, and believe to be in habitual communion with God, tells us that God speaks something to him, and, though we cannot hear God speaking it to us, we yet feel it to be good and beautiful; then, we may well give *great weight* to that Prophet's *authority* in the matter, though we can never be so sure of that good and beautiful thing as we should be if we heard God speaking it to us ourselves. If *a great many* of

those who live most to God and are most habitually in communion with him, tell us that God speaks the same thing to them; then we cannot but give *still greater weight* to their united authority, though *still* we cannot be so certain as if we heard God speaking it to us ourselves.

Thus, some Christians (or Theists) do not recognize the voice of God speaking to them that *they* (their souls, spirits) shall live after their bodies are dead. But they have found Jesus to be so true a Prophet in telling us how God is like a Father to us (Lesson XVIII.) and other things, that they feel they may well give great weight to his *authority* when he tells us that God's word to him is that *we* (our souls) shall live after our bodies. And when they find a vast number of those who live most to God, and are most in communion with him, saying that God makes *them* sure of the same thing, they cannot but attach still greater weight to their authority united with that of Jesus. Still they cannot be *so certain* of that future life as if they heard God speaking it to them themselves.

Some persons tell us that the Prophets (Jesus, the Bible, Mohammed, the Koran, &c.) have [absolute] authority even when they are speaking of

mere historical events or things in material nature [order of creation, origin of man, history of Kings of Judah, birth and resurrection of Jesus, &c., &c.]. But no direct voice of God tells such things as these to man; man has to find out about them as best he can. Therefore, a man being a real Prophet [a book containing many real prophesyings] does not make him [it] any authority on such matters.

Lesson XXII.

Summary of Lessons XII.—XXI.:—Not many Wills, but one Will, ruling all phenomena. Races of men as they grow up change out of [Fetichism into Polytheism, and then out of] Polytheism into Monotheism.

Prayer:—God's answer to it; it may be asking, telling, or thanking; it may be expressed in any way or even unexpressed. It is sometimes expressed by offering. Material askings belong to children and races in their childhood, and are not wrong, though the grown-up disuse them. Confession. The more we know God, the more we shall give thanks. Prayer may pervade life and become habitual communion.

[God in himself mostly unknowable, but none the less surely known in his relation to us.]

PROPHETS:—What they are; how to know them; they are only greater religious teachers (preachers); *Jesus*, the greatest: his life and teaching. The Bible; its errors and value; other prophetic books. Religion and Theology.

AUTHORITY:—Meaning of the word. God, not man or book, the ultimate authority in religion. Yet Prophets may have a real, though subsidiary, authority in religious beliefs. But Prophets and prophetic books, as such, have no authority whatever in outward, non-religious (historical or material) matters.

Prayer, *Prophets*, *Authority*, these are the three great subjects of this second group of Lessons; as *Life*, *Spirit*, and *God's* three primary modes of *Communication* to us, are of the first group (Lessons I.—X.).

Let the Teacher remember throughout that he is not to teach *my* religion, but *his own*. All I have written is by way of *suggestion only;* and its whole purpose will be defeated, if it is treated as possessing or claiming intrinsic *authority*.

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